



# Advanced Practitioner in Sustainable Leadership

Session LP4.11: Obstacles to Honeybee leadership

# This session

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In this session, we ask why more organisations do not adopt Honeybee leadership when it's clear – Honeybee practices lead to better outcomes for the firm, society and the planet.

Many factors slow down or inhibit adoption of Honeybee Leadership, despite its proven benefits.

We identify a range of obstacles stopping people from implementing Honeybee leadership practices.

# Activity: Why aren't all leaders Honeybees?



- Pause the video
- Think about the obstacles to Honeybee leadership
- Write down as many as you can



Think about reasons relating to:

- Individual leaders
- Organisational culture and systems
- Stakeholders
- Political pressure
- Lack of knowledge
- The situation and context

# Obstacles – individual level

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- Sticking with conventional wisdom is comfortable and easy—it's business as usual.
- Most humans (including managers!) disregard hard evidence and make decisions based on ideological beliefs.
- Ignorance—managers learn about Locust thinking in business school, less often about Honeybee Leadership.
- Short-termism acts on managers seeking to maximise their annual bonuses and stock options in an uninterrupted way.
- Executives may fear losing some of their personal “market value” as CEO if performance dips during major change.
- Short-term appointments of top executives does not allow the time needed to complete major change.

# Obstacles – organisational

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- Change disrupts organisations.
- Change initially creates both financial and intangible costs.
- Stock markets and associated media reports can punish a listed firm if growth and profits lag during change.
- Major change involves risks, bringing with it the chance of a drop in short-term performance.
- Stakeholders need to be prepared to overlook short-term dips in performance and focus on the long term.
- Making radical change is hard work and can take a long time to embed and then maintain.

# Obstacles – external context

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- The short-termism of stock markets.
- Bias in the media, lobby groups and journal editors towards Locust Leadership.
- Influence of consultants, politicians and managers.
- “Washington” policies that require countries seeking international loans to follow Locust principles as a condition of the loan.

# 7 inhibiting factors

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1. *Simply professing what is right is not enough*: just talking about sustainability is insufficient without a corresponding change in manager beliefs and behaviours.
2. *Green distraction*: confusing sustainability with just being green forces a narrow view of sustainability, and reflects a failure to understand the links between environmental, social and financial sustainability.
3. *Not my job*: the belief that sustainability is up to someone else, not to me.
4. *Firefighting*: being distracted by short-term, immediate demands and issues rather than focusing on the long term that sustainability requires.

(Source: Le Roux, C. and Pretorius, M. 2016. Conceptualizing the limiting issues inhibiting sustainability embeddedness. *Sustainability*, 8, 364)

# 7 inhibiting factors

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5. *Past performance*: people retain old ways, rather than demonstrating and engaging in practices associated with cultural change and innovation towards sustainability.
6. *Strategy not communicated*: managers blame others because the sustainability strategy is not widely known and understood in the company, reflecting poor communication of the strategy.
7. *Harmony*: Some disharmony is inevitable during major change. However, change is inhibited by poor alignment among corporate beliefs, strategy and decision-making practices; and a lack of awareness of the links between economic, social and environmental goals.

(Source: Le Roux, C. and Pretorius, M. 2016. Conceptualizing the limiting issues inhibiting sustainability embeddedness. *Sustainability*, 8, 364)



# This session

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In this session, we saw that many factors slow down or inhibit adoption of Honeybee Leadership, despite its proven benefits. Among the factors research has identified at the **manager level** are:

1. Not really believing in the sustainability strategy.
2. Assuming sustainability is just about being green.
3. Believing that sustainability is someone else's job.
4. Putting out short-term fires and ignoring the long term.
5. Clinging to the past instead of forging new behaviours.
6. Not communicating the strategy properly and blaming others.
7. Ignoring links within the organisational system and between the sustainable outcomes.